



Judicial Council of California
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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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Title

Judicial Branch Technology: AB 716
Remote Public Access Implementation
Outcomes

Report Type

Information

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Submitted by

Judicial Council Technology Committee
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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the significant progress the trial courts have made in implementing Assembly Bill 716, which requires courts to provide public audio access to courtroom proceedings when courthouses are physically closed. It presents information the Judicial Council collected from trial courts on the use of one-time funding of \$66.4 million provided through the Budget Act of 2022 to upgrade courtroom audio and video systems. Through a two-year effort, 1,171 courtrooms have been modernized, and projects are underway in another 210 courtrooms. This report highlights key outcomes and direct feedback from participating courts, including improved accessibility, reduced disruption, and cost savings and operational efficiencies.

Relevant Previous Reporting or Action

At its meeting on March 24, 2023, the council approved an allocation of approximately \$32 million to 28 trial courts for fiscal year (FY) 2022–23 funding for courtroom audio upgrades that satisfy the statutory mandate of Assembly Bill 716 (Stats. 2021, ch. 526) (Link A).¹ At its meeting on January 19, 2024, the council approved an allocation of approximately \$25 million to

¹ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Judicial Branch Technology: Allocation of Funds for AB 716 Legislative Mandate, Fiscal Years 2022–23 and 2023–24* (Mar. 2, 2023), jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11694259&GUID=CFF3EBC4-494B-4F85-B6AD-D26675A1DB1E.

17 trial courts for FY 2023–24 to support audio upgrades in courts that were either not fully funded or did not request funding for FY 2022–23.²

Analysis/Rationale

To support the ongoing courtroom modernization initiative mandated by AB 716, the Judicial Council implemented a multiyear funding strategy to ensure remote public access to courtroom proceedings when courthouses are physically closed. This access is provided through public audio streaming or telephonic listening options, as required by statute.

The Budget Act of 2022 allocated \$33.2 million from the General Fund for FY 2022–23 and \$33.2 million for FY 2023–24, along with four dedicated positions and \$1.632 million in ongoing funding to implement and sustain this access statewide. Of the total allocation, approximately \$57 million was designated for direct distribution to trial courts to upgrade audio equipment in courtrooms constructed prior to 2000.

To determine funding distribution, Judicial Council staff conducted a statewide survey of trial courts to assess audio and video equipment needs. Forty-nine courts responded, and their submissions were analyzed and prioritized based on courthouse age (20 years or older), case type usage, and prior funding status. Courts that had initiated but not completed upgrades using earlier Information Technology Modernization Funding were eligible for supplemental support.

The average cost of an audio equipment upgrade was estimated at \$50,000 per courtroom. All upgrades were required to align with technical specifications developed by the Information Technology Advisory Committee’s Hybrid Courtroom Workstream.

As a result of the two-year funding cycle, 31 courts received funding for upgrades to courthouses built before 2000, and 1,381 courtrooms were funded for upgrades. All eligible courts that submitted funding requests received full or substantial funding, and courts not funded in the initial cycle were given the opportunity to apply in the second year.

This strategic investment has significantly advanced the state’s goal of equitable, remote public access to judicial proceedings, particularly in civil matters, and has modernized courtroom infrastructure in alignment with legislative intent. Additionally, approximately 1,639 courtrooms statewide—representing approximately 75 percent of all courtrooms—were compliant with AB 716 as of December 31, 2025. This figure accounts for courtrooms that became compliant through independent efforts rather than AB 716 funding. Approximately 461 courtrooms remain that will still require remote public access technology upgrades.

² Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Judicial Branch Technology: Allocation of Funds for AB 716 Legislative Mandate, Fiscal Year 2023–24* (Dec. 29, 2023), jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12563621&GUID=59FA2B84-134A-428C-B4E1-D45287C3A704.

Implementation progress

As of December 31, 2025, and across the two-year funding cycle, 27 courts completed 35 upgrade projects,³ modernizing a total of 1,171 courtrooms statewide. Six courts still have eight projects in progress, impacting an additional 210 courtrooms. Five of these courts are among the 27 that have completed projects. A list of participating courts and courtrooms upgraded is provided in Attachment A. These included 9 large, 10 medium, and 12 small courts.

Following is the project status by fiscal year as of December 31, 2025:

FY 2022–23 (Year 1):

- Twenty-four courts completed upgrade projects.
- Three courts have Year 1 projects in progress:
 - Los Angeles
 - Mono
 - Orange

FY 2023–24 (Year 2):

- Eleven courts completed upgrade projects.⁴
- Five courts have Year 2 projects in progress:⁵
 - Los Angeles
 - Orange
 - Sacramento
 - Santa Clara
 - Solano
- San Francisco had a project in Year 1 and planned a second project in Year 2. However, the court was unable to encumber its funds for the Year 2 project in time, so the Year 2 project was canceled.

This progression reflects strong statewide engagement and momentum toward full AB 716 compliance.

Implementation highlights

- The Superior Court of Butte County transformed 16 courtrooms across two courthouses with an \$800,000 investment, successfully eliminating persistent issues, such as poor audio quality and unreliable wireless microphones—dramatically improving the courtroom experience for all participants.

³ Eight courts completed two projects.

⁴ Some courts completed projects both years.

⁵ Los Angeles, Santa Clara, Solano, Mono, Sacramento, and Monterey will be completed by June 30, 2026. Orange will be completed by June 30, 2027.

- The Superior Court of San Diego County, one of the largest in the state with 90 courtrooms across five courthouses, reported that the newly installed audio systems were “well received by judges,” signaling a strong endorsement from the bench and a meaningful upgrade to courtroom functionality.
- The Superior Court of Inyo County, with just one courtroom, maximized its \$50,000 allocation to complete critical design and repair work. The improvements earned positive feedback from court leadership, underscoring the value of even modest investments in audio infrastructure.

These improvements have increased public access, supported courtroom efficiency, and helped ensure compliance with AB 716 while modernizing critical audio infrastructure.

Fiscal Impact and Policy Implications

The two-year AB 716 funding initiative has delivered substantial fiscal and operational benefits to California’s trial courts while advancing the state’s commitment to public access and courtroom modernization. The \$66.4 million in General Fund allocations across FY 2022–23 and FY 2023–24 enabled courts to implement critical audio infrastructure upgrades that directly support compliance with AB 716’s remote access requirements.

Fiscal impact

- **One-time investments** in courtroom audio systems have yielded long-term value by improving reliability, clarity, and accessibility.
- **Cost savings** were achieved through centralized Judicial Council support in vendor negotiations, design reviews, and procurement coordination. For example:
 - The Superior Court of San Francisco County saved approximately \$165,825, which represents approximately 12 percent of its grant, through Judicial Council–assisted vendor negotiations.
 - The Superior Court of Inyo County benefited from Judicial Council–led design corrections and vendor proposal reviews, resulting in a more functional and cost-effective solution.
- Courts reported that the **funding significantly reduced their financial burden**, especially in jurisdictions where total project costs exceeded available local resources.

Operational impact

Upgraded systems have enhanced both in-person and remote courtroom experiences by:

- Improving audio clarity for all courtroom participants, including judges, jurors, attorneys, litigants/parties, and public observers;

- Increasing reliability, with fewer microphone dropouts and stronger wireless coverage; and
- Providing more consistent functionality for in-person and remote participants, supporting transparency and continuity of operations.

These improvements have directly supported courtroom efficiency, reduced technical disruptions, and increased public trust in the judicial process.

Policy implications

The initiative underscores the value of centralized technical support and funding coordination in achieving statewide policy goals. It highlights the importance of modernizing legacy infrastructure to meet evolving public access expectations and legislative mandates. The program's success may inform future policy decisions regarding technology standards, funding models, and statewide implementation strategies for courtroom modernization.

Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: AB 716 Upgrade Status as of December 31, 2025
2. Link A: Assem. Bill 716,
[leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB716](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB716)

AB 716 Upgrade Status as of December 31, 2025

Superior Court	Courtrooms Completed	Courtrooms In Progress
Small Courts		
Butte	16	-
El Dorado	1	-
Humboldt	8	-
Inyo	1	-
Mariposa	1	-
Merced	6	-
Modoc	1	-
Mono	-	1
Nevada	7	-
San Luis Obispo	15	-
Santa Cruz	8	-
Yuba	6	-
Medium Courts		
Contra Costa	21	-
Kern	40	-
Monterey	21	-
San Joaquin	19	-
San Mateo	25	-
Santa Barbara	26	-
Solano	14	5
Stanislaus	12	-
Tulare	17	-
Ventura	11	-
Large Courts		
Alameda	69	-
Los Angeles	392	160
Orange	127	22
Riverside	52	-
Sacramento	9	19
San Bernardino	12	-
San Diego	101	-
San Francisco	67	-
Santa Clara	66	3
Total Courtrooms	1,171	210

Notes:

Court size is based on number of judges: large (48+), medium (16-47), small (15 or fewer).

Court size totals = 9 large, 10 medium, 12 small.